

ANG

PAHAYAGAN NG PARTIDO KOMUNISTA NG PILIPINAS
PINAPATNUBAYAN NG
MARKISMO - LENINISMO - KAYSIPANG MAO ZEDONG



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STRUGGLE: PREPARING WORKING CLASS
FOR LEADERSHIP ROLE IN REVOLUTION

Filipino workers join class brothers throughout the world in militant commemoration of international workers' day tomorrow, May 1.

In the Philippines as in other parts of the world, the day will be an occasion for the working class to reflect and to act--reflect on the development of the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system and replace it with socialism, and act to safeguard its precious gains and carry the struggle to higher levels.

May Day 1979 finds the Filipino working class exploited and oppressed as never before. This is hardly surprising considering that the U.S.-Marcos fascist dictatorship was set up by U.S. imperialism, the comprador big bourgeoisie and the landlord class precisely to stop the toiling masses from turning on the national democratic revolution, and to intensify further their exploitation and oppression.

Evidence of these abounds. Workers who assert their democratic rights, to freely organize and to strike run the risk of being arrested and imprisoned as "subversives", in addition to losing their jobs.

A few pesos is what they get for producing enormous wealth that the big capitalist appropriates for himself. Their wages are pegged at levels barely enough to sustain them and their families.

More problems face the working class and the rest of the Filipino people--the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie.

Just last month, U.S. imperialism and its fascist puppet Marcos raised anew the prices of gasoline and other oil products. This immediately set off an increase in the prices of all other commodities and of services.

But exploited as the workers are, it is in this very condition that lies the seed of their own salvation. Exploitation and oppression make the workers struggle. And struggle based on revolutionary theory awakens them to their role as the class that leads other exploited and oppressed classes and sectors in waging revolution.

Struggle amid fascism

The almost seven years that have elapsed since the imposition of martial law in September 1972 have witnessed an enlargement of the Philippine working class.

This is the very proof of the fascist regime's coddling of U.S. and Japanese imperialism and of the local comprador big bourgeoisie which have lost no time in establishing new enterprises to take advantage of the low wages set by the regime, and various other incentives.

The regime's own surveys bear out the enormous growth of the working class within martial law. And if we use as basis the year 1964, just before the Marcos puppet regime assumed power, the increase is even much bigger--over 100 percent.

As of 1975, according to a government survey of industrial firms with 20 workers and over and service establishments with five workers and over, there were already over 2,000,000 industrial and service workers. There were only 1,000,000 in 1964. This figure has become much bigger, especially if we take into account the increasing number of workers "exported" to Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East, and if we count the workers in the smaller industrial and service firms.

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The Filipino working class has grown in numbers as well as in experience. These last seven years since the imposition of martial law have seen the workers give free rein to their creativity, their initiative and their boldness in dealing with the imperialists and their local cohorts.

In fact, the history of martial law is itself the history of the unprecedented acceleration of the Filipino workers' process of awakening. Prohibited by the fascist regime from organizing free and genuine unions, the workers have gone on and organized unions dedicated to their welfare.

Prohibited from striking, they have gone on and staged one strike after another, in addition to other forms of struggle like slowdowns, sit-down strikes, petitions, marches, and demonstrations in government offices.

All these are helping the proletariat in its historic role of leading the rest of the Filipino people in the national democratic revolution and, immediately following, the socialist revolution.

In carrying out this great and glorious task, the Filipino working class is led by its advance detachment, the Communist Party of the Philippines, which bears, disseminates and practices the scientific revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought*.

Not a few of the strikes in early martial law were launched by unions led by the Party. The majority of these strikes were spontaneous, however--proof of the workers readiness to struggle under the most difficult fascist constraints.

In the face of the workers' awakening and heightening of political consciousness, their vanguard--the Communist Party--has, on the whole, provided them correct ideological, political and organizational leadership.

The Party has had its share of shortcomings as well. For a long time after its reestablishment in 1968, its curriculum was so heavy that many advanced worker and peasant activists could not gain admission into its rolls.

Party takes corrective measures

After the Third Plenum of the Party Central Committee of December 1975, the Central Committee issued the following call to all its cadres and members in the important document, "Our Urgent Tasks":

"It remains our policy to expand the Party boldly on the basis of the revolutionary mass movement and without letting in a single undesirable. We must follow the reasonable standards set by the Party constitution and we must increase the number of Party members who are of worker and peasant status. In this regard, we must keep in mind that we do not wish to be an exclusively cadre party.

"We want a large mass of Party members who are of worker and peasant status because this is a measure of the effectiveness of our revolutionary work, because we want to accomplish gigantic tasks that mainly concern and involve them and because we want to counteract and dilute the negative influence that Party members coming from other classes are liable to bring into the Party."

*We are now using the official spelling for the names of Chinese persons and places, as adopted earlier this year in the People's Republic of China. These spellings are based on the actual Chinese pronunciation of these names.

Since then, the number of Party members and candidate members of worker and peasant origin have so increased that today they comprise the vast majority of the Party's total membership.

This is not to say that the Party has completely overcome its shortcomings vis-a-vis the Filipino working class.

For instance, until early this year, some leading cadres in a certain region had a tendency to belittle the workers. While paying lip service to the working class as the most revolutionary in world history, their actions did not bear this out.

These cadres sought to confine to arbitrary stages the workers' process of politicalization. The workers' political consciousness was first to be raised to the general level of antifascism. Only when they had thoroughly participated in the antifascist struggle would their consciousness be raised further to an understanding of the anti-imperialist and antifeudal struggles.

While so confining workers to stages, they purposely withheld from them Marxism-Leninism, the very revolutionary theory of the working class.

True, the Party membership of worker origin increased in the region under discussion, even while the leading cadres wallowed in sectarianism. But the increase would have been much larger had the cadres not strayed from the Party's correct political line.

The Party Central Committee has taken concrete steps to correct the erring cadres' sectarian and tailist policies.

One other measure that the Central Committee has undertaken to streamline and speed up political work among the worker masses is to coordinate efforts on a nationwide basis.

Where efforts had previously been fragmented on a region-by-region basis, the groundwork is being laid for maximum cooperation and coordination among cadres whose principal task is to arouse, organize and mobilize the worker masses.

Increasing workers' role in revolution

All these efforts fit into the Party's projections and plans for the national democratic revolution as it progresses from the early substage of the strategic defensive to its advanced substage. This will be achieved in the not too distant future.

Most of the strikes under martial law have been in pursuit of the workers' just economic demands. Under the most trying conditions, the workers drew upon their wellspring of creativeness, initiative and boldness in outwitting and outfighting the enemy.

The coming years will see the working class, under the Party's leadership, intensifying its economic struggles while leading the rest of the Filipino people in more and ever wider political struggles.

While carrying forward the mass movement in the urban areas, the coming years will also see the working class produce more and more full-time revolutionaries who will be deployed in the countryside to assume leading functions in the people's war under the leadership of the Party and the New People's Army.

The Filipino working class has a lot to look forward to as it prepares to commemorate Labor Day 1979 in proletarian solidarity with the working class of all other countries in the world.

* * *

LAVAITES WANT TO PUSH WORKERS
INTO COLLABORATION WITH ENEMY

The Communist Party of the Philippines is the advanced detachment of the proletariat, representing its interests, and leading the violent struggle that will result in the establishment of socialism and the proletarian dictatorship.

In the document "Rectify Errors and Rebuild the Party", which was approved on December 26, 1968, it is stated with great pride that: "Now the Communist Party of the Philippines is being re-established and rebuilt as a Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought Party. It is the most advanced detachment of the Filipino working class which is leading the Philippine revolution forward." And: "Class leadership of the Philippine revolution is now in the hands of the working class."

Knowing this, the revolutionary toiling masses feel the urge to spit at the mention of the Lavaite revisionist renegade clique. For here is a handful of bureaucrats and bullies calling themselves "Communists", and all the time polluting the labor movement and the entire revolutionary movement in the Philippines.

Under the supervision of Ruben Torres--one of Blas Ople's boys at the reactionary regime's Ministry of Labor and secretary of the revisionist clique's "labor section"--the Lavaites are trying to "recover the dominant position" in the labor movement. (The reference is to the years following World War II when they deceived and betrayed the Filipino masses, first of all the workers, who were already making revolution. In the face of the people's continued and courageous mass actions, the revisionist renegades turned their backs on the task of leading the people's democratic revolution.)

The Lavaite clique used to control a federation (the KILUSAN). In 1978, almost the entire membership resigned, having become disgusted with their methods and policies.

Today, what remains of KILUSAN is the Union de Impresores de Filipinas (UIF), a cluster of small exploited unions under Juan J. Cruz. There is also the "Samahan ng Kababaihang Manggagawang Pilipino" ("Filipino Women Workers Association") whose chairman is Ramel Paris.

Supporting the Marcos regime

Jose Lava bragged, in an article written in 1978 for the World Marxist Review, that "an important achievement of the working class movement in the Philippines" is the fact that the revisionist clique "has now secured the right to participate in the country's public affairs". The clique's front organizations, he reported, have been revived and "are campaigning to bring the Party's position home to the (people), particularly on government policies".

It will be noted that what Lava is talking about is their having received the "freedom" to agree with the fascist dictatorship's antipeople policies--and this is what he calls "an important achievement"!

What could be the position of the Lavaite "party" that is now being so graciously allowed by the reactionary government to be brought home to the people?

This position is none other than that of the reactionary ruling classes. For example, trade unions controlled by the Lavaites were made to sign a statement last June 1978, when U.S. Vice President Walter Mondale visited the Philippines. In the statement, the revisionists shamelessly wrote a complete reversal of the truth:

"The Filipino people wholeheartedly stand behind the present administration in all its efforts to stop foreign meddling in our national affairs,

to uphold national dignity and to struggle for complete political and economic independence."

If the revisionist renegades insist on believing that the U.S.-Marcos fascist dictatorship is truly defending the Filipino people's interests against imperialism, nobody is stopping them from doing so; the fact is that they and their fellow reactionaries, the Marcos clique, make a very suitable match.

But it's another matter for them to drag in the name of the workers and of the entire people, who are resolutely advancing today along the road of armed revolution, to join in their praise for the ruling fascist clique.

Claiming that Marcos represents the "nationalist bourgeoisie", the Lavaites mislead the working class to make it serve the reactionary classes and abandon its role of leading the other oppressed and exploited classes in making revolution.

Cruz, for his part, pretends to know nothing about the fascist decrees and orders that are like so many bayonets aimed right at the workers' bellies. According to this revisionist dummy, the overwhelming majority of workers allegedly have kept their peace because "they are mature and responsible enough to know where they stand". He added: "It is out of awareness of the progressive strides made by the Marcos administration in some aspects of our national life that they tried to be patient."

Confronted with class repression exercised over the workers by the reactionary government's agencies, the Lavaites can only give one advice: "Get a big shot of a lawyer!" This was the remark they made in the "Political Resolution" approved by the clique in 1978: "NLRC (National Labor Relations Commission) decisions tend to be more promanagement rather than prolabor. In the absence of the right to strike, this cannot be helped because management can always hire the best lawyers to represent it in labor hearings."

Laying the blame on the masses

The fact is that the revisionists blame the people for the sins of the reactionary ruling classes. Women workers, Paris said for instance, "prefer to keep silent and to leave everything to fate", they are "ignorant" and "awed by the employer's influence", and because of this they are exploited.

And from far-away Czechoslovakia, where he is on a long vacation sponsored by his Soviet social-imperialist masters, comes the judgment of Jozsef Lova: "The exploited classes themselves are not yet prepared to wage militant struggle, in particular a good part of the working class."

Puffed up with arrogance--aren't members of the Lava clan, according to their feudal standards, the only ones worthy of being called really revolutionary?--the revisionist renegades refuse to hear the militant challenge hurled by the Filipino workers against their exploiters, in the countless strikes they have boldly launched under conditions of fascist rule.

At their "seventh congress" (Ang Bayan, February 28, 1979), the revisionist clique bared a program of action for the workers that is a mere listing, from beginning to end, of the "reforms" they are asking of the reactionary state. Among these are an increase in overtime pay, measures concerning health and safety in places of work, lower interest rates on SSS and GSIS housing loans, etc.

The revisionists' program is pure reformism. Not one call is made to assert the right to strike, nor the right to engage freely in union activities, nor all the other democratic rights that the U.S.-Marcos fascist dictatorship has denied the working class and the entire Filipino people.

Apparently, this begging program is what the Lavaitees plan to implement in order to "recover the dominant position" in the labor movement. Which does not prevent them from employing more "persuasive" means. At several factories in Bulacan, for example, Lavaite goons conducted union membership drives by waiting at the exit and sticking a gun at the workers, forcing them to apply for membership in the yellow union.

Soviet meddling

Meanwhile, the Soviet social-imperialists have also been on the go, to catch up with and overtake U.S. imperialism in sabotaging and corrupting the workers movement in the Philippines.

The Soviets are dealing here with Bonifacio Tupas, head of the Trade Unions of the Philippines and Allied Services (TUPAS).

Last year, Tupas attended the congress held in Prague (Czechoslovakia) by the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which is controlled by the social-imperialists. There, he defended the ban on workers' strikes by the Marcos fascist regime.

The strike ban, the yellow labor leader Tupas said, "is just a measure to assure the speedy development of the country". Besides, the right to strike was abused by some labor groups in the past, the traitor added--to the delight of the social-imperialists and of the fascist dictator Marcos.

The social-imperialists have been using Tupas to assail the control of labor federations by their rival superpower. In obedience, he has been hitting out at the meddling of the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI) and of two German foundations that also serve as U.S. imperialist fronts, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Of course Tupas fails to mention that he himself and his federation are tools used by Soviet social-imperialism against the interest of the Filipino proletariat.

It can be seen that the Soviet social-imperialists and their local revisionist agents have been conducting trade union work with no other aim but to destroy the labor movement from within and to make it serve Soviet contention with the U.S. imperialists in this part of the world.

They certainly have no intention of upholding the revolutionary leadership of the working class in the Filipino people's struggle for liberation from exploitation and oppression.

On the contrary, they are trying by every means to prevent the growth of the Filipino workers' class consciousness, push them towards collaboration with the class enemies, and block, in an all-round way, the progress of the Filipino people's democratic revolution under the leadership of the proletariat and its Party.

VARIOUS REGIONS TRACE NPA GROWTH SINCE ITS FOUNDDING

Ang Bayan has continued to receive reports and news items from the different regions about the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the New People's Army last March 29.

Larab (Spark), revolutionary mass newspaper in Eastern Visayas, traced the rapid advance and growth of the people's army in the region.

According to the paper's editorial, the Party Regional Committee formed the first people's army unit from seven Red fighters armed with two automatic carbines, one semi-automatic carbine, one bolt-action rifle and homemade guns primed with match heads.

In August 1973, the unit began operating in the hinterland barrios of the towns of Calbiga, Pinabacdao, Sta. Rita and Basey in Western Samar.

Today the people's army has several regular guerrilla squads and platoons, all well-armed, and several hundreds of people, bearing homemade rifles, organized into militia units.

Of the 70 towns in the island of Samar, 40 are now part of the guerrilla zones and fronts of the three provinces of Eastern, Northern and Western Samar. Numerous military actions have been successfully carried out since the first ambush launched by the people's army in barrio Nabutasan, Calbiga, on May 20, 1974.

"As the New People's Army enters its 11th year," Larab said, "we must all exert ourselves to make it grow bigger and stronger, for it is the Party's leading mass organization in the advancement of the armed struggle, the principal form by which we crush the class enemies. We must try to improve the skills and quality of our Red commanders and fighters. We must try to win victories in the tactical offensives launched by New People's Army units."

Silyab (Flame), mass newspaper in the Bicol region, gave an account of the celebration held on March 29 by Red fighters and the revolutionary people in a barrio of Albay province. Marking the festivities were songs, poems and speeches by the people's fighters and the masses. There was also a short play showing how reactionary troops abuse the people.

In its editorial, Silyab recalled the beginnings of armed struggle in the Bicol region, starting from the initial efforts of three Red fighters in Tigaon, Camarines Sur, in 1970, the rapid expansion to nearby towns, and the first NPA attack launched in Iriga, Camarines Sur, on August 21 of the following year.

From 1973 to 1975, the newspaper went on, 400 enemy troops were deployed in Sorsogon province. They were met by the combined forces of the NPA with its rifles and the revolutionary people, with their hidden pits, traps and other native means of defense. "The people in this province truly came to realize that their well-being depends on the revolution," Silyab added. Criminals disappeared and the peasants got a much bigger share of the harvest. But these gains were negated when several leading cadres turned traitor.

Today, however, the revolutionary movement in Bicol is picking up again, having become richer by many previous lessons. The NPA continues to grow bigger and more vigorous in the region, with the people's firm support.

In the Philippines and abroad

Northwestern Luzon's mass newspaper Dangadang (Armed Struggle) cited the growth in numbers and in strength of the New People's Army not only in the region but all over the country. Armed struggle is being waged by the Party and army with the firm support of the people, and it is winning more and more victories, the newspaper added.

It was not only in the Philippines, but also overseas, that the revolutionary people celebrated the 10th anniversary of the CPP and NPA.

Ang Katipunan, organ of the Union of Democratic Filipinos (KDP), reported that about 250 Filipinos and Americans gathered at the Mission Cultural Center in the city of San Francisco in California last January 7 to mark the Party's anniversary. Discussions centered on the history of the reestablished Communist Party of the Philippines and its leading role in the revolutionary movement.

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Speakers from the KDP and the International Association of Filipino Patriots (IAFP) gave talks on the different aspects of the struggle and reported on the stages of the Party's development since its reestablishment on December 26, 1968.

The meeting, which lasted for over two hours, also featured revolutionary songs describing the struggle of the Filipino people against the martial law regime and U.S. colonial domination of the Philippines.

The Party's anniversary was celebrated not only in San Francisco but in other U.S. cities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Diego and Washington, D.C., and in Hawaii. The occasion was also marked in the cities of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver in Canada.

POOR, MIDDLE PEASANTS ADVANCE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION IN SAMAR

The agrarian revolution is continuously advancing in the countryside of Samar on the basis of the united strength of the poor and middle peasants under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed force, the New People's Army.

With the people's army firmly supporting and helping them, the peasant masses are organizing themselves and standing up against the landlords and the merchant-usurers who have long exploited and oppressed them.

Relying mainly on their own organized strength, peasants in hundreds of barrios on this island have won victories, big and small, against their class enemies. With their unity, courage and determination, and made more confident by the rapid advance of the people's army, they have forced landlords to reduce land rents and merchants to pay better prices for their produce.

Let us take some examples.

In a barrio located in the western part of Eastern Samar, the peasants were able to force the landlords to reduce the land rent to a level below 10 percent of the harvest.

The landlords used to provide the land, the carabao and the seeds, while the tenants cultivated the land, shouldering extra labor expenses at planting and harvest time.

Because the peasants usually had no cash, they were forced to borrow from the landlords at interest rates that were as high as 166 percent.

Obviously, a tenant was rarely able to pay his debts in full, because his share of the harvest was small. More often, he received only one cavan of palay for every five cavans harvested.

Poverty is intense among the masses in the area, not only because of feudal exploitation but also because of the low productivity of the land arising from the backwardness of technology and methods of production.

Mass action is answer

In tackling the problem, advanced elements among the masses, with the help of Party cadres, called a meeting for social investigation. Peasant representatives analyzed local conditions, the problems met, and the solutions to them. They asked the question: "Upon whom does the solution to the problem depend?" Class analysis was taken as the key link in answering this question and applied to specific conditions in the barrio.

Thus they saw that in conducting revolutionary work in the barrios, they must rely primarily on the poor and lower middle peasants, arouse, organize and mobilize them, while trying to win over the middle and upper middle peasants, and even the rich peasants. Then, the peasant committee was formed, led by poor and lower middle peasants.

Under the leadership of this committee, a big meeting was called where the barrio people discussed their problems and the steps to take in solving them.

Assured of the support of the entire barrio, the committee confronted the landlords to demand a reduction of the land rent. At the same time, the peasants stepped up their campaign to declare a smaller harvest to the landlords, keeping the rest for themselves.

Because of the unity shown by the peasants, the landlords agreed to their demands. In addition, the wages paid to the farm workers were increased. This amount would also be taken from the landlords. In sum, the rent was effectively reduced to less than 10 percent.

Similar steps were taken in other barrios.

In one of these, a despotic landlord was making life very difficult for the peasants. A former town councilor, he took advantage of his position to grab the peasants' lands and lord it over the barrio folk.

By harassing the peasants and falsifying land titles, he was able to acquire lands and enlarge them.

Exploitative system

For every eight cavans of palay harvested, which is the average total harvest of a peasant in the barrio, two were taken by the landlord. Apparently small, the rent was actually a heavy burden for the peasant because the total harvest of eight cavans was not enough to feed his family.

Whenever the peasants needed cash, which was often, the landlord would lend to them at usurious interest rates. It was common for the debtor to work as a servant in the landlord's house to help pay back the loan.

The masses hated the landlord. In fact, many of them were already planning to kill him. But they were told by the cadres of the Party and the Red fighters that this alone could not solve the problem.

The exploitative system must be destroyed, and this can be done step by step by means of the organized action of the peasantry.

As in the previous example, class analysis served as the key to solving the problem. The combined strength of the poor and lower middle peasants was consolidated, as the other middle peasants were being won over. The rich peasants were neutralized; later on, however, they gave their support to the peasant movement.

Mass meetings were called to arouse the masses for the struggle. Songs and plays were presented to further inspire them. Then they confronted the landlord.

He was stubborn at first and even threatened with arrest those who were protesting. But the peasants were steadfast. Nobody obeyed the landlord. No one hauled or carried palay to his place.

It did not take long before the landlord gave in. Afraid and weary, he told them that he was willing to accept "whatever amount you may want to give".

"Tiklog" and "tago"

In another barrio in Eastern Samar, the tactic of confrontation with the landlord was combined with the effective use of the tiklog, the traditional system of mutual aid, and "operasyong tago", the tactic of declaring to the landlord only a part of the harvest. Through the tiklog, the peasants were able to pool their strength and organize themselves better against the class enemy. On the other hand, through operasyong tago, they assured themselves of as much as 30 percent of the total harvest.

Showing a high level of unity and organization, the peasants in 23 barrios of Calbiga, Pinabacdao and Hinabangan in Western Samar acted together to put a stop to the merchants' control over the price of the corn that they produce.

They were able to raise the price of their corn from ₱1.50 to ₱2 per ganta. They also did away with the practice of measuring the corn with a tin can pounded out into a rounded shape, a method by which the merchants further cheated them.

Putting an end to the merchants' excessive profits at their expense, the peasants limited these to 25 centavos per ganta, regardless of the price of the corn.

With the help of Party cadres and Red fighters, the peasants had held barrio meetings to discuss how they could solve their common problem and win in the struggle against the merchants. Through these meetings, their long-simmering grievances built up to become a strong determination to fight.

Supporting revolution

Having organized on a wide scale, the peasants set up the Committee to Control the Price of Corn to coordinate their struggle.

From July to August 1978, the peasants moved as one and refused to sell their corn at the price dictated by the merchants. Seeing their unity and strength, the rich peasants who own corn lands threw in their support.

The merchants were thus forced to accept the price decided on by the peasants.

Peasant associations were organized and forged in the heat of these struggles. At present, these associations perform such tasks as planning for production, waging struggle against the landlords, usurers and merchants, and providing material support for the revolution.

The barrio people firmly support the New People's Army and the revolutionary mass movement. Many from their ranks are already working full time for the revolution. They have set up militia units which are responsible for safeguarding the safety and peace of the barrio. They are always ready to give a warm welcome to comrades who pass by or who arrive in their barrio.

The upsurge of these mass movements has enabled the New People's Army to advance even more rapidly throughout the island. This, in turn, is the assurance of still greater victories by the peasant movement in the future.

As Comrade Amado Guerrero said, in Specific Characteristics of Our People's War:

"Only by carrying out agrarian revolution can the revolutionary leadership activate the peasant masses as the main force of the revolution and realize the basic alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry. From the ranks of the downtrodden peasantry can then be drawn the greatest number of armed contingents. As it now stands, the New People's Army is composed mainly of peasant recruits. The growth of our people's army depends on the support of the peasant masses."

HERE ARE CONCRETE EXAMPLES HOW
CULTURE SERVES THE REVOLUTION

Cultural work can play a highly effective role in propelling the revolutionary struggle forward, as shown by the experience of comrades in Samar, in the Eastern Visayas.

In this area, numerous forms of cultural expression are being created and propagated by Party cadres, Red fighters and the revolutionary people.

They draw from the deep well of traditional culture, transforming the people's songs, dances, poetry and drama and using them in the most effective way to arouse, mobilize and organize the broad masses of the people for revolution.

When the people are called upon to decide on an important issue, for instance, a balagtasan or poetic debate may be held, or a skit may be presented.

A few years ago, the people of entire villages who had fled to the mountains to escape enemy persecution were asked to decide on whether they should return to the plains or not. Some were in favor of returning, others objected. They had been living in the mountains for about a year, and there they felt safe from the enemy's violence and destructiveness.

On the other hand, earning their livelihood would not be so difficult on the plains as in the mountains, and there was the political advantage of the people being there to actively resist the enemy and participate themselves in the expansion and consolidation of the revolutionary forces.

A balagtasan was held, in which each side presented its arguments in verse. When everyone had said what he wanted to say, the majority of the people had become convinced that it was correct to follow the suggestion for them to leave the mountains and return to the plains.

More recently, a mass campaign was launched to unite the peasants in three towns so they could effectively insist on getting a fair price for the corn that merchant-usurers buy from them.

As part of the political preparation for the struggle before it was launched, units of the New People's Army presented skits they themselves had made up, with the help of the local people's committees. They showed how the merchant-usurers exploit the people, how hard the life of the peasants is, and how the latter take action and wage a successful fight after uniting and making a firm stand.

Old songs are made new

Sure enough, as in the other revolutionary guerrilla zones and fronts throughout the Philippines, many songs are being composed which tell about the oppressed people rising up, or which recount certain vivid events, or rouse the people to struggle.

Among these songs, in Samar, are traditional forms of popular literature like the isamayling and the binasaynon.

In the old Samar culture, the isamayling is a poetic form in which two persons or more alternate in singing their improvised verses. Formerly, the isamayling meant trouble: during a festival, when people frequently took more wine than they could take, one man might take up a guitar and, strumming it, challenge anyone around to a fight. He would do this by singing a song. Others would answer him, still with a song. The exchanges would become more and more intense until a fistfight broke out or knives were drawn.

Today this is being changed. According to the occasion, revolutionary lyrics are being written to the tune of the isamayling, making it a vehicle for the exchange of opinions and the sharing of experiences. But sometimes it still happens that, in a barrio within the guerrilla zone, someone may lapse into the old ways and start looking for trouble by singing the old isamayling. In this case, the other barrio people are sure to answer back, in the same isamayling melody and rhyme scheme, reminding him that they have all rejected those old customs that harm the people's unity.

The binasaynon, on the other hand, is a long poem, sung to a definite melody, which may concern various topics. Like the isamayling, it has become a weapon used by the people today to heighten their unity and intensify their fighting spirit.

An ambush is made into a dance

Other artistic forms are created besides songs, poems and plays. Popular in the guerrilla zones of Samar are the dances which depict different aspects of the revolutionary struggle. An example of these new dances created by NPA units is the one called "TO" (tactical offensive), in which the dancers show how an ambush is launched. Then there's another dance entitled "Discipline"—it illustrates the three main rules of discipline and the eight points for attention that are followed by the people's fighters.

The people have come to really love the revolutionary culture that has welled up from their own lives and struggles. At the programs held in mass gatherings, when anyone sings what are judged to be "bourgeois songs", he is criticized and made to sit down. The audience wants songs with revolutionary meaning, even if the tune is taken from songs played over the radio. In fact, a wrong idea had to be corrected in some places, according to which the old folk songs shouldn't be sung any more. Today, use is still being made of these songs, and even of current commercial "songhits", to spread revolutionary ideas.

The Party did not send cadres to the Eastern Visayas region who had a specific assignment to do cultural work. The spread and development of this type of activity was the initiative of Party cadres and mass activists who, before long, were then given the attention and guidance of the region's Party organization.

The experience of Eastern Visayas shows that revolutionary mass culture will flourish together with the progress of the national democratic movement, as long as the Party's cadres are creative in making it develop.

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NPA UNITS IN EAST VISAYAS SHOW HOW TO NEUTRALIZE BAD ELEMENTS

In the several years of armed struggle in Samar, the New People's Army has not sustained serious losses there that resulted from a tip by enemy informers.

The reason lies in the successful implementation of a policy that is based on careful class analysis and solid organizational work. On this basis, favorable conditions are created for the steady expansion and consolidation of the revolutionary forces, while safeguarding the lives of the people and their army.

"Ninety-nine percent of those who might be a source of danger for us can still be neutralized, if not actually won over to our side," explained one cadre from Samar.

It is characteristic of Samar that the people have a long history of militant resistance to oppression and that, on the other hand, the reactionary government has neglected its development. For these reasons, enemy influence is relatively weaker in Samar and it is relatively easier to organize the people for revolution.

When an NPA unit first arrives in a barrio, it immediately conducts an investigation into the classes to which individual villagers belong. Those who are likely to turn enemy informer are identified: these are the bad elements such as thieves, murderers, bullies, drunkards, gambling addicts and others with an antisocial record.

The unit does not seek to avoid meeting these people. Instead, they are sought out for a quiet talk, in which the objectives of the revolutionary movement are explained to them, ending with the advice for them to mend their ways in accordance with the wishes of their fellow villagers. Present at the interview are the relatives of the bad element, and often they take the lead in asking him to lead a new life.

Needless to say, the appropriate steps are taken to ensure the safety of the NPA unit and the security of their movements. While following a policy of persuasion towards the bad elements, the Red fighters take the utmost precautions. Preliminary contacts are always made secretly, and care is taken not to be seen openly carrying long firearms.

Most of those who are approached in a persuasive manner are willing enough to change; and more so because all around them the masses are being aroused, mobilized and organized to take their destiny into their own hands and to dare fight for revolutionary changes in their own lives as well as in society.

Spies surrender

In November 1975, the people's army discovered that informers had been planted by the enemy in southwest Samar's guerrilla zone. An announcement was made public by the people's army calling upon the informers to stop their activities against the revolution, and asking them to unite with the people against the common enemy.

Before the two-week deadline was over, 17 agents of the reactionary government had surrendered to the NPA in the towns of Calbiga, Basey and Sta. Rita. They also turned over their official papers. Eight others gave themselves up in the northeastern guerrilla zone.

But some bad elements are really bent on doing harm to their fellowmen, despite repeated warnings. Upon the people's demand, the "devil" (demonyo) receives the death penalty especially if he has incurred blood debts. His relatives are present at his trial. Usually, they give their full consent to the sentence, and sometimes it is they who ask for it.

Previously, when the policy was not yet very clear, some units argued that any bad element must be punished right away, supposedly to frighten the others and stop them from turning informer.

But this policy was not grounded on class investigation, and could run counter to the revolutionary movement's political objective of uniting the many and isolating the few diehards. In the end, the policy only succeeded in frightening the people, while the real "devils" learned to be more careful in covering up their counter-revolutionary activities.

Wrong labels

There were instances when even those who were not bad elements came under suspicion. The label of "devil" would be arbitrarily stuck on those who made unflattering comments about the revolutionary movement, or who

failed to show warm support. It would also happen that a villager's frequent trips to town were taken to be sufficient cause for suspecting him. But these were all weak reasons, and they were not enough to consider someone to be on the enemy side. Steps were taken to correct the mistakes, the cases were reviewed one by one and finally many names were removed from the list of "devils".

Today, instead of isolating the suspected bad elements, thorough study is made of their economic status, political standpoint, the reasons for their antisocial behavior and their standing in the barrio, and they are given all the chances of learning about the revolution and joining it.

In one case, a confirmed informer was literally pulled away from the edge of the grave and given another chance. The Party gave weight to the fact that although he tipped off the enemy about the presence of an NPA unit (which he admitted doing), he was not the enemy's principal agent in the area. And, more important, he was one of the poorest peasants in the barrio who had allowed himself to be used by the enemy because of the money.

This was explained to him. His hands were untied. Crying, the informer sank to his knees and promised to dedicate his life to the revolution, from then on.

A long time has passed since then, and he has remained true to his promise. He is now remolding himself by his wholehearted participation in revolutionary struggle. And this is still another victory, a political victory for the revolution.

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